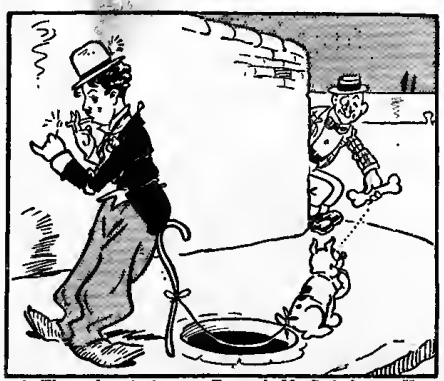
CHARLIE CHAPLIN APPEARS TO-DAY. CHARLIE CHAPLIN

VOL. II.—No. 72.] EVERY TUESDAY. [WEEK ENDING AUGUST 7, 1915.

CHARLIE CHAPLIN, the Scream of the Earth (*the famous Essanay Comedian*).

1. Here he is, readers! Good old Charlie! Absolutely IT! A scream from start to finish. What's he doing now, eh? "'Twas here," says he, standing in a graceful posish. by an artistically designed coal-hole, with the faithful hound attached to his cane: "'Twas here I was to meet Maggie! Phwpsts!" But see! A rival approaches!



2. Then the rival, one Esmond MacSydeslyppe Hugo Balscadden O'Chuckitupp—the rival, we repeat, did a hit of dirty work. Fact! He held forth a tempting bone, and Charlie's faithful hound cast the eye of approval on same. Base rival! "Soon," says the chirpy Charlie, putting on another fag: "Soon she will be here. Oh, joy!"

3. But the hound, deciding to do the chew on the bone, legged it up the paving stones, taking Charlie's stick with him. And Charlie, with his visible means of support thus removed, did a graceful flop into said coal-hole just as the lovely Maggie appeared! "Charlie!" said she, with much spurnery, "What do you think you're doing?"

4. Ha! Enter the rival! "Don't you have anything to do with him, Maggie," says the rival: "He's absolutely sale price, he is. Marked down to one-and-nine-three—him! Come with me to some nook, where we may hold converse!"

5. So off they went to the nook, but Charlie was soon up and doing. Yes! He flopped along, soon coming upon the rival telling the tale of love to the beauteous one. "Ho!" says he. "Now to get a portion of my own back! Now for it!"

6. Well, the rival was just on the point of laying his riches at the damsel's dainty patent number two's, when Charlie, picking up a dustbin (full flavour) which happened to be handy, shoved it into his outstretched fins. Which did it—yes!

7. Up jumped the young person. Talk about the frozen eye! Wow! "Sir-r!" she said: "I did not come here to be entertained by such poltrooncry. Please remove yourself forthwith. Your face causes me uneasiness! No explanations, please! Get hence and proceed to climb trees for mushrooms. All is over between us!" Or words to that effect. Then Charlie did the inward chuckle, and raised his hat with courtly grace.

8. And he did the affable and endearing chat that completely restored him to favour in the damsel's eyes. "Permit me to suggest," says this gallant old filbert, "a light lunch at the Café de Chancitt, with a jaunt on the merry old motor-'bus to follow. Having just received my quarterly allowance—not half—all is well. Let us proceed!" And they did proceed—some! More news next week, so look out!

DON'T MISS THIS GRAND NEW SERIAL STORY. BEGIN TO-DAY!

ALL ON HIS OWN!

A Story of a Boy Without a Friend —or Home.—

By the Author of "The Red Rovers."

Into the Great, Wide World.

"COME along, Tim!"

Tom Allen called softly to his little terrier as he hurried along the lonely forest glade. He did not like to raise his voice in that mysterious silence, for what strange things might not be lurking in the gloom amongst the trees—awesome things, that only come out by night.

It was not that Tom Allen was a timid boy, but there is something about the gloom of a dark, lonely forest at night, even though it be in the heart of England, as in the present case, which tries the strongest nerves.

"Come along, Tim!" he repeated.

He felt glad of his dog's company, though Tim also seemed to feel awed by his surroundings, and now kept close to his young master's heels.

So they made their way until they came to an old habitation, made partly of stone, clay, and wood. It stood in a dark depth of the forest, a sort of no man's land, and in bygone days had been the home of a hermit. Now Tom lived there with his aunt and uncle. At least, they told him he was their nephew, though often he wondered if it could be true.

His uncle, whose name was Walker, was standing at the door of the house now. He was a cunning-looking, shifty-eyed ruffian, and he scowled evilly at the boy as he came up.

"You young whelp!" he snarled. "What d'you mean by being so late? You ought to 'ave been in bed 'arf an hour ago. Come 'ere!"

As he spoke he seized Tom by the shoulder and jerked him forward so roughly that his head struck against the doorpost, and a cry of pain broke from his lips. Instantly Tim sprang at the ruffian; but the latter, by a lucky chance, thrust out his arm in time, and the dog fell backwards. Walker slammed the door, leaving Tim jumping about outside, trying to get in to help his young master.

"I'll kill that cur," growled Walker, glaring with bloodshot eyes at Tom; "and you, too, if you ain't careful. What d'you mean by bein' so late?"

"You sent me such a long way, uncle."

"Long way, you snivelling young rat! Get on up to bed. You won't get any supper tonight."

This, alas! was no new experience for Tom, for more often than not he had to go to bed hungry. He did not mind putting up with it himself, but he hated to make Tim suffer, for the dog's meals generally consisted of a portion of his master's. Walker and his wife refused to feed Tim, so Tom had to part with what was intended for himself. For a sturdy, growing lad of fourteen he was not given enough in any case, but he cheerfully gave some up so that Tim should not go hungry.

Now Tom went up to his room, which was a cold, damp attic, with bare wooden walls, and the open tiles of the roof for ceiling. He was followed up by Walker, who thrust him inside, and then locked and bolted the door from the outside.

In a cellar underneath the house Mrs. Walker awaited her husband. She was standing by a small furnace, which she was fanning into fierce flame with a bellows, and on the floor alongside her were various gold and silver articles, stolen goods waiting to be melted down.

"Where've you been?" she demanded crossly as Walker entered.

"Waiting for that young Tom," he replied. "You know we can't start till he's locked in. I reckon it'd be a good job if he was out of the way altogether."

The woman nodded carelessly, and went on with her work. Whether Tom lived or died made little difference to her. If he was in her way she would help to put him out of it as readily as she would crush an insect.

Up in the attic Tom stood by the open window, gazing out at the black, mysterious forest. Somewhere beyond those miles of trees lay the great wide world that he occasionally read of. There were lots of boys out there with happy homes and kind parents. He wondered what it must be like to have a comfortable home and a loving father and mother. He could not imagine it.

As he stood by the window he looked a boy that any parent would be proud of. He was sturdily built, and tall for his age. He was a good-looking boy, too, with fearless, honest blue eyes and a firm mouth. Life in the forest had made him wiry, developed his natural instincts, and taught him to be self-reliant and ready to find his way out of difficulties.

He had no idea how Mr. and Mrs. Walker made their living. He did not dream that thieves brought stolen silver and gold to the house to be melted down, for he was always kept out of the way.

Every day he went to the village school, about three miles away, through the forest, taking a crust for lunch, but he had no friends there. Either the boys and girls turned up their noses at his ragged, shabby garments, or else they taunted him with belonging to the old witch and her husband, for many of the country people thought Mrs. Walker was a witch.

Tom felt very miserable as he lay on his ragged mattress that night; but in the morning it was different, for when he looked out of the window the birds were singing merrily, and the sun was pouring through the great green trees, transforming the dark, terrifying forest of last night into a veritable earthly paradise.

For breakfast Tom received a hunk of bread, some dripping, and a cup of very weak tea. He could have eaten it all, and more, but he saved some of the bread for Tim, and presently set out on his way to school.

This was the happiest hour of the day for Tom as he and his dog ran along in the fresh morning air. Presently he paused to give Tim the bread, and whilst the dog was eating its scanty meal a blackbird on a tree near by continually whistled a refrain of four notes.

"All right," called Tom laughingly. "I can do it, too."

He whistled the four notes in exact imitation; but, to his surprise, they seemed to sound as though they came from some distance away in the direction he was looking in.

"That's curious!" he murmured. "How did I do that?"

He tried it again, and this time the notes came from just behind Tim, who promptly sprang round to look for the bird. When he saw there was no bird there, Tim cocked one ear, put his head on one side, and then looked up at his young master in such a puzzled manner that Tom shouted with laughter.

But he speedily set to work to test his curious discovery again, and he found that he was able to make his voice come from where he liked. As a matter of fact, he was just discovering himself to be a natural ventriloquist.

So busily occupied was he that he arrived at the village school without noticing the three-mile walk, and presently he crossed the playground, having left Tim to wander about or sleep until midday.

"Look out, here's Tom Allen!" shouted a boy named Smith tauntingly. "He'll put the witch's spell on you if you're not careful!"

Tom suddenly thought of his new power, and he sent his voice in a wild howl just behind Smith's ears. Instantly a yell of fear broke from the boy's lips, and he swung round, but found no one near him. He stared in astonishment; and then the schoolmaster's voice was apparently heard:

"Smith, come here!"

The voice came from the waterbutt, Tom having thrown his voice there; and, more astonished than ever, Smith went across to the butt.

"Where are you, sir?" he asked.

"I'm here, Smith," came the reply, apparently from inside the butt, which was tall and half-full of water.

Smith pulled himself up, and hung over the edge, peering down into the interior, and just at that moment the schoolmaster walked across the playground.

"Now, then, what is that boy doing there?" he demanded.

Smith slid down and blinked at the master, who asked:

"What were you doing there?"

"I was looking for you, sir," replied the boy.

"What!" shouted the master. "Looking for me in a waterbutt! Have you taken leave of your senses?"

"Well, sir, you called to me out of there," mumbled Smith.

"What do you mean? You'll get into trouble, my boy, if you tell me lies to my face like that!"

Shortly afterwards school began, and the master, who was a very pompous individual, and thought he knew more about everything than anyone else, commenced a lesson on grammar. Presently he made a mistake, which was promptly pointed out by a boy.

"Please, sir," he cried, "it says different to that in the grammar-book!"

"What if it does?" snapped the master. "I know better than the fellow who wrote the book. Now then!"

"Ha, ha, ha!"

A loud, scornful laugh came from alongside the conceited man, causing him to turn hurriedly to see who had dared to laugh at him in such a manner.

But there was no one there, for the laugh had been thrown by Tom, who knew the book was correct, and felt disgusted with the pompous master.

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The laugh came from the other side of the master now, causing him to swing round. Then it came from behind him, and he jerked in that direction, blinking, and exclaiming with amazement and anger.

Round and round him travelled the mocking laughter until the master was spinning round almost like a tee-to-tum; but suddenly he lost his balance, and reeled over. He tried to fall into his chair, but instead he sat heavily in the wastepaper-basket, in which he became firmly wedged.

His legs from the knee downward and his arms, head, and shoulders stuck out of the basket; the rest was inside. He made a fierce effort to extricate himself, but only succeeded in tipping the basket over.

All this time the boys had been bubbling with laughter, but when they saw the basket tip over they could not restrain themselves any longer, and a tremendous yell of laughter arose.

Growing angrier and angrier, the master now managed to twist over on to his hands and knees, so that he looked like an eccentric tortoise with a wastepaper-basket in place of a shell.

Then the master began to creep about the floor making strange noises, for he was too angry to speak clearly. His face was scarlet with rage, and he continually jerked his back up to try to split the basket.

The boys laughed until they were nearly ill, but then one of them who happened to glance out of the window whispered:

"Look out! Here's her ladyship!"

It was the squire's wife coming to visit the school, and the master, who heard the words, let off an awful groan. Tom began to feel sorry now, for he did not want the master to suffer too much.

He had never treated Tom nicely, but, all the same, the boy, who was kind-hearted to the core, meant to get him out of his difficulty if he could.

At that moment the door opened, and the squire's wife entered. When she saw the remarkable position of the master she paused and stared at him in amazement.

He ceased his struggles also, and crouched on his hands and knees, gazing piteously up at her.

"Mr. Crump," she exclaimed severely, "will you kindly explain the meaning of the remarkable position I find you in?"

The master opened his mouth, whereupon an enterprising fly flew in, and he very nearly choked. This was Tom's opportunity, and, standing up, he said:

"Please, your ladyship, we're having natural history, and Mr. Crump is showing us how a tortoise walks!"

He stepped out to the master's side, and said:

"Is that right?"

"Yes, of course!" stuttered the master.

As he spoke he slyly eased the basket without the squire's wife noticing it, and Mr. Crump was able to free himself and rise to his feet. Her ladyship was smiling now, and she gazed at him approvingly.

"A clever idea, Mr. Crump!" she said. "I am glad to see you take such trouble to teach your pupils."

"I'm always thinking of fresh things, your ladyship," responded the master, "but I insist on order as well, and I shall have to cane that boy who left his seat just now without being told to."

This rank injustice after what he had done made Tom feel very angry, but he was too loyal to tell the truth to the squire's wife, who asked at that moment:

"Do you imitate other animals, Mr. Crump?"

"He does the camel splendidly, your ladyship!" came a voice from the window. "He often has the hump, and he gives it to us, too!"

The master made a rush for the window, but found no one there, for it was Tom who had thrown his voice.

Presently the squire's wife departed, and then Crump called Tom out to be caned, but the boy refused to obey.

"It's not fair!" he cried. "I got you out of trouble, and I'm not going to be caned for it!"

"Come out!" snapped the master.

"I'll go out!" said Tom.

As he spoke he jumped up and ran out into the playground, and hurried across it, despite the shouts of the angry master as he bade him return.

"I'll not go there any more!" murmured Tom hotly. "I'll run away. I can't stand it any longer!"

It was the last straw, and Tom resolved to go out into the great world he had never seen. Surely there were people there who would not always be taunting him or treating him cruelly?

He did not go to school that afternoon, and he made up his mind to leave the place he called home that night. After tea, part of which he kept for Tim, he stepped out of the house in the forest, his mind full of his plan.

Suddenly a man came hurrying through the trees carrying a sack on his back. He knew who Tom was, and he dropped the sack in front of him, so that its contents became visible. They consisted of silver teapots, jugs, spoons, forks, etc.

"Give these to your uncle," said the man hurriedly. "Tell him to get them melted down at once. I can't stop, because I——"

He paused suddenly, for Walker had appeared in the doorway and was glaring at him, his face livid. Then he hurried across, and in a snarling whisper he said:

"You fool! The boy doesn't know anything about it, and now you've given the game away!"

"I didn't know!" muttered the man.

Walker turned and stared ferociously at Tom.

"He'll 'ave to be put out of the way. It'll come to it at last!" he growled.

"Yes," said his companion. "No one must blab. How are we going to do it?"

Walker looked round, and then pointed to an old stone-edged well.

"Down there!" he whispered. "No one will ever know."

"Please, your ladyship," said Tom; "we're having natural history, and Mr. Crump is showing us how a tortoise walks!"

(Continued on the next page.) 7-8-15

ALL ON HIS OWN!

(Continued from previous page.)

"That's it!" muttered his companion. "Better do it now. Here's your wife; she can give us a hand!

Tom stood near by gazing at the silver goods. He could not hear what was being said, though he had an idea that the two men were talking about him.

"Here, you!" called Walker, turning to Tom. "Come 'ere!"

All unsuspecting the dreadful fate that awaited him, Tom obeyed the order, and then found himself suddenly seized roughly by the two men.

"We've 'ad enough of you—see?" snarled Walker. "You ain't no nepbew of ours, and we've finished with you!"

Tom did not mind very much, because he bad meant to go in any case; in fact, he was very glad to hear be was no relation of theirs. He, of course, thought he was to be turned adrift.

"You were left by a woman one winter's night when you were a baby," went on Walker, "and we've kept you since, but we've finished now. Up with 'im, mate!"

To Tom's amazement he was lifted off the ground and carried away. He struggled furiously, and nearly succeeded in getting free, but between them they carried him to the well and held him over it. Then for the first time he began to understand the awful deed they contemplated, and a gasp of horror broke from his lips.

"Oh, don't—don't!" he cried. "Let me go!"

Walker only laughed harshly, and said:

"Drop him!"

They released their hold on the boy, and he went falling down into the dark depths of the well, a terrible scream breaking from him, but speedily growing muffled as he vanished into the gloom, and then suddenly ending.

"That's finished 'im," said Walker callously. "Now let's get on with the work."

The ghastly crime had had no effect on him, and he started to walk calmly away with his companion, when a man, carrying a gun under his arm, suddenly stepped out from the trees.

"Who was that screamed?" he asked.

"Me!" replied Mrs. Walker quickly, as she suddenly appeared from the house. "I was frightened by a snake."

The gamekeeper, for such he was, glanced at her suspiciously, and then looked at her companions and the strange old house near by.

"This is a rum sort of place," he said; "and I guess there's some rum goings-on here, too."

"What d'you mean?" growled Walker. "We don't interfere with nobody. You leave us alone, and we'll leave you alone."

"You've been left alone too long," said the gamekeeper; "that's been the trouble. Still, you won't be left alone much longer; the squire's on your track."

The startled expressions that came over the three faces told the gamekeeper that his suspicions were not at fault.

"This part of the forest has been left untouched for years," he continued; "but now it's going to be cleared out, and this ramshackle old place will be pulled down." He pointed to the dilapidated house.

"When?" asked Walker.

"Any day. Perhaps to-morrow," replied the gamekeeper.

The scoundrel gave a gasp of terror, but managed to make it sound as though it was anger.

"Nice thing," he growled; "nice thing for us who've been livin' 'ere all these years to be turned out as though we were animals in a farmyard!"

"Rubbish!" said the gamekeeper. "You've never paid any rent. You've nothing to grumble about. By the way," he added, "where's that boy who lives here?"

Mrs. Walker and the other man turned away, whilst Walker began to cough loudly in order to gain time to recover.

"Gone," he replied hoarsely; "gone away! Ran away 'e did, ungrateful young 'ound!"

"I don't blame him," said the gamekeeper calmly. "Well, don't forget what I've told you. This place is going to be cleared out; I might as well say cleaned out."

Then he strode away, telling himself that the Walkers and their home needed clearing out in the same way that rats and their nests were destroyed.

"Think they know anything?" asked Mrs. Walker, her face pallid, staring after the retreating gamekeeper.

"No," replied her husband; "but they will if we ain't careful. Besides," he added hoarsely, "there's that."

He pointed to the well as he spoke.

"They'll probably clear that out while they're at it," he said; "and then they'll find——"

"A-a-a-ah!"

His words had been interrupted by a low, horrible scream, which tore its way between Mrs. Walker's bloodless lips as she pointed to the well.

Over the stone edge a dead-white face had appeared, with wet, dank hair sticking down on to the forehead. The eyes were partially open, but dull and staring.

It was the face of Tom Allen.

The three who had conspired to murder him shrank close together, watching him with dilated eyes as he slowly came over the edge, and then sank to the ground.

He lay perfectly still, and for some moments the three watchers did not move, but just stood and stared. Then Walker went slowly forward and bent over the body. Presently he looked back and waved his arm.

"Come on!" he called. "He's alive."

Mrs. Walker and the other man went across and gazed down at Tom, who lay unconscious.

"Look at his hands," said Walker. "He's climbed up the chain. He must have caught it as he fell into the water, and so saved himself."

"What are you going to do with him now?" asked Mrs. Walker.

"Settle 'im for good and all, and clear up everything!" was the fierce reply. "What'll 'appen if they come here to look round? Quod, if they find what's 'ere. But they ain't goin' to find it. Come along; let's clear up and quit."

He picked up Tom's still form, and carried the boy into the house. Then he set his two companions to remove everything of value, which was not much.

"The rest will 'ave to burn," he said, "furnace and all. It won't do to leave anything."

Wood was brought in from the forest, and the cellar filled with it, and then oil was poured over it.

"Now we'll make sure of this young whelp," said Walker. "Hand me over that hank of cord."

It was given him, and he tied Tom's legs together, and then tied the wrists behind the back, finally thrusting a gag into the boy's mouth.

"Good-night to 'im," he said, with a brutal laugh.

He picked the boy up in his arms, and strode up the stairs to the garret, and threw Tom's bound and unconscious body on to the ragged mattress. Then he went downstairs, and rejoined his companions.

After making sure that all preparations were complete, he stepped down into the cellar, and tossed a lighted match on to the wood. Instantly the paraffin-oil blazed up, and in a few moments the wood was crackling away merrily.

"There'll be a furnace down there presently," he said, when he returned, "and the whole of the building will fall down into it and be burnt to ashes."

Then the three scoundrels strode away, whilst the flames roared furiously in the cellar.

Five minutes passed by, and Tom still lay where he had been dropped; he had not moved an inch.

The cellar now was simply a furnace of flame, and already a part of the ground floor had dropped into the fire, which was roaring up through the hole, licking at the ceiling of a ground-floor room.

Then it was that Tim, the terrier, came trotting up to the house. He came to an abrupt halt as he heard the crackling of the wood and the roar of the flames, and stood staring in a puzzled manner at the house.

Suddenly he realised that something was wrong. That strange instinct which animals possess, akin to what human beings call second sight, told the dog that its master was in danger, and it lifted up its head and began to howl mournfully.

A moment or two later it stopped suddenly and stepped gingerly to the front door. The flames had not yet burnt through the passage floor, and the staircase was intact.

For a few seconds the dog hesitated, and then it suddenly galloped up the stairs, and paused near the attic door, sniffing the air. Then it turned to the door, and began to scratch on it with its paws.

The door was not locked, nor even latched, and the pressure of Tim's paws caused it to swing open. A moment afterwards the dog ran in, and stood over its young master's form, licking the bound hands.

Suddenly the boy's eyes opened, and he gazed round in the uncertain manner of people returning to consciousness. Speedily, however, he recognised the familiar surroundings of the garret, and then he tried to get up, but discovered at once that he was bound.

Over and over he turned, striving to snap the cord that held him fast, whilst Tim watched him with puzzled eyes, wondering what his young master was doing. Speedily, however the dog understood that something else was wrong, and it stood with head on one side watching Tom as he lay on his face, trying to twist his fingers up to the cord round his wrists.

Tim saw that cord, and knew it had not been there before. What was more, he could see that Tom was trying to get rid of it.

"Ah, this is where I come in," Tim seemed to say to himself, and in a moment his sharp, white teeth had closed on the cord.

Tom felt the touch of the dog's mouth and teeth, and his heart leapt with hope.

"Go on, Tim—go on!" he exclaimed. "Stick it, boy!"

Thus encouraged, the dog worried the cord, growling half under its breath all the time, its sharp teeth working on the fibre like saws.

And now smoke was beginning to curl up into the room, and the roar of the fire and the crackling of the timbers could be heard plainly. The heat was growing intense, too, so much so that Tom's face was already bathed in perspiration.

"Worry it, boy—worry it!" he gasped.

Crash!

A reverberating roar followed the noise, and the whole cottage shook as the ground floor and the staircase suddenly collapsed into the seething pit of fire.

Now all that was left was the shell and the three upper rooms, beneath which was no support, only great, terrifying flames that rose up like monstrous crimson waves and licked the walls and ceiling.

Then one found a crack, and a second afterwards a tongue of fire shot through the floor by Tom, whilst an increased volume of smoke came pouring in.

"Tim! Tim! Oh, be quick!" panted Tom.

Another tongue of flame, much bigger than the last, coiled through, and hung for a moment in an arc above the boy and dog.

And all the while Tim worked like a hero, growling softly, but always tearing at the cord with his teeth, until suddenly one snapped. Instantly Tom's wrists came a little apart, and he began to jerk them. Then the cord, frayed by Tim's teeth, snapped in several places, and Tom rolled over and sat up, his arms free.

"Thank you, Tim," he said, half in a whisper, as he pulled out his pocket-knife and cut the cord round his feet.

Then he sprang up, but nearly fell, owing to his stiffened limbs. He moved them about, and then started across the room, the floor rocking under him as he walked.

Just as he reached he window a great wave of flame came through the door and enveloped him. Instinctively he hid his face in his arms, and then staggered on, his clothes scorched, his skin hot and tingling.

At last he came to the window and put his head out. The first breath of fresh air was like paradise to him. He turned back in a moment, however, and picked up Tim and put him out on the roof. Then he scrambled through after him, and as he did so the floor he had just been on fell with an awful crash into the blazing furnace.

A tree growing by the cottage stretched out a long, strong branch to the roof, and along this Tom crawled, with Tim smuggled against his breast. He was as much at home in trees as on the ground, and it took him but a short while to clamber down.

Then he stood, whilst the evening shadows fell, and watched the ruin of what had been his home. He knew he was meant to be lying in that blazing heap, and he shuddered suddenly as he thought that the would-be murderers might return.

"Come, Tim," he said quickly, and away they went through the forest, not knowing what lay ahead, unconscious of the many trials and adventures that the future held in store.

All Tom knew and cared about was that he had got away from the cruel pair who had brought him up, and that, all being well, he would never see them again.

So, all on his own, Tom Allen set out with Tim into the great wide world.

(This Splendid Serial will be continued in Next Week's FUNNY WONDER.)

THIS GRAND SERIES COMPLETE EACH WEEK.

QUEER, TRUE TALES FROM A SOLICITOR'S NOTEBOOK.

The Vegetable Marrow's Message.

My old friend and client Mr. Fairburn had but one amiable weakness—he was inordinately fond of his garden. No matter whatever business we might happen to be engaged upon, the conversation invariably drifted round to the best cure for green fly on roses, the respective merits of different fertilisers, or something else connected with horticulture.

"I can't help it; it is a passion with me!" he declared one day, just after I had drawn up his will for him. "My garden is my pleasure and pride, and, after I am gone, whichever of my nephews looks after it best will be the one that will benefit."

Certainly the will was in some respects a remarkable one. It stipulated that the nephew—Mr. Fairburn was a widower with no children—who brought to me the copy of the will within the space of twelve calendar months was to inherit all. In the event of the copy of the will not being discovered within the stipulated time, the whole of Mr. Fairburn's fortune was to go to charity. The clue to the discovery of the copy of the will would be found in the garden.

"I only hope," said my old friend, "that when death claims me it will be in the summertime."

"And I hope," I rejoined, "that it will be a long time before he claims you at all."

Mr. Fairburn shook his head.

"Something seems to tell me I am not long for this world," he said. And he proved to be a true prophet. He was taken ill in April, and died in June.

It was, of course, my duty to read out the terms of his strange will, and his three nephews received the news with mingled feelings.

"It's hidden treasure—that's what it is!" said William, the eldest. "I'll dig over every yard of the garden to-morrow but what I'll find it somehow!"

"I don't think that will answer," objected James, the second eldest. "Very likely the old boy planted certain flowers in a group, so that when you spell out their names they give a clue to the whereabouts of the will. I wish I knew something about gardening; but, as it is, I can only wait and see."

Robert, the youngest, was the only nephew who made no unfavourable comment upon his uncle's eccentricity. He was a quiet, studious young fellow, and in my heart of hearts I could not help hoping that he would be the lucky one to discover the clue.

He certainly kept the memory of his uncle green by tending the garden with his own hands, and keeping it neat and tidy in the style which the old man would have loved.

His brothers openly jeered at him, and William often vowed to carry out his threat of digging the garden all over—an operation which would have been fatal to all beauty at that time of the year.

"I am certainly opposed to what you suggest," I objected. "Your uncle was such a lover of his garden that I am sure he would never do anything that would call for its destruction."

Fortunately, my opinions carried some weight, and the garden was left undisturbed. So also were the contents of the house, for until the will was discovered they had no real owner, legally speaking.

James continued to do nothing, Robert to tend the garden in the way his uncle would have done.

July came and went, and a few days after August Bank Holiday Robert came quietly into my office.

"Is this the original of my uncle's will?" he asked quietly, producing a document. 7-8-15

I glanced up at him quickly, took the parchment, and examined it closely.

"There is no doubt about it!" I decided at length. "Allow me to congratulate you! How did you discover it?"

"Come with me, and I will show you," he answered. And, picking up my hat, I followed him.

We walked through the streets to the house of the late Mr. Fairburn, through the drawing-room, and out, as I fully expected we should do, into the garden, now in the height of its full summer beauty, thanks to Robert's care and attention.

He led the way through the flower garden, out to the vegetable garden, and, stooping down, brushed aside the leaves which hid a giant-size marrow.

Upon the rind of the marrow the words "Inside 'Pickwick'" were standing out clearly.

"That's the clue!" Robert said, in tones of quiet triumph. "I expect my uncle scratched those words upon the marrow when it first formed and was only an inch or two in length. As it grew and swelled, so did the letters develop, until they were large enough to read, as you see for yourself. Such a dodge is frequently carried out for flower shows and harvest festivals."

"But what does 'Inside' "Pickwick"' mean?" I asked.

"My uncle was a great lover of the works of Charles Dickens," Robert answered; "so I just looked inside the copy of 'Pickwick Papers' in the library, and there I found the will."

I congratulated Robert upon the reward of his patience and industry, but his brothers were anything but pleased with themselves when they heard of it.

However, Mr. Fairburn's fortune was large enough to allow Robert to make each of his brothers an allowance, which he very generously did.

(Another Tale of this Grand Series will appear in Next Week's FUNNY WONDER.)

UNCLE POPPEM'S POP-SHOP

1. "Such a bargain, ma tear!" said Unky, when he'd obtained the chest of drawers for elevenpence and an old knife. "De profit vot I shall make on this peautiful chest will be lovely! Let me see, now," says Unky. But here something happened. "My goodaness!" Unky ejaculated.

2. No wonder, either. For a bold bad burglar (who was in league with the joint who'd sold it to Uncle) hopped out. "What ho!" says he, in burglish talk, "Now I'll put it across old Poppem's goods! Ha, ha!" Now a persevering rat had nibbled a hole in this chest of drawers—

3. And old Pop. got the handy fire-hose ready, and shoved it through the hole that the rat had made, just as the burglist comes back with a choice selection of oddments and endments. "Now I'll hop in here till my pal comes to buy the old chest back!" says he.

4 But not so. Georgie. Unky turned that hose on, and performed an effective little solo on his nickel-plated police-whistle and so that burglar was fairly kiboshed, as you might say. "You are an old cleverness, Solly, with all your faults!" chortled Ma Poppem "Dot's some smartish work!"

Magistrate (to prisoner, who had been trespassing): "Now then, what business had you to be in the field? Didn't you see the notice at the gate?"

Prisoner: "Oh, yes, please, sir, I saw a notice, but it had 'private' on it, so I didn't like to look!"

DAN THE RAILWAYMAN.

1. Dan was doing sentry-go on the railway bridge, when—corks! he saw his best girl, Bessie, in a boat with another joint. Old Dan absolutely seethed with indignation. So what did he do? Ah, boys!

2. Why, he spotted the jolly old cake they'd brought for lunch, and as the boat came along under the bridge, Dan tied a rope to his gun, and let it down, securing the cake, as the pretty picture so clearly shows us.

3. And he pretty promptly had that cake up on the bridge, good fellows! And serve them right, too! What say you? "How *dare* she go about with another chap?" said Dan. "I'll eat every bit of the cake!" And he did so!

IT DID COME DOWN!

1. "This wants to come down just a leetle bit more!" said the handy old citizen, who was laying the stair-carpet. So he—

2. Gave it a bit of a pull and it came down all righto! Oh, yes, no question. See plate 2. Ho, ho!

3. And when Maud, the maid, arrived to see what the circus was about, well, to say that she was surprised, is mildly putting it!

Our Funny Wonder Boys Willie & Wally.

1. Ho! Oho! Observe Willie and Wally tempting the domestic porker under that little trolley, with the succulent carrots for bait! And see jolly old Jeff and Ma taking in the ozone, and admiring the atmosphere. Yes, you are right, reader, they are all down at the seaside for a jolly holiday.

2. A JOLLY HOLIDAY! Wow! Just as they got the piglet under the box, up came Ma and Jeff. "Do take a seat, you must be *so-o* tired!" cooed Willie in his silkiest tones "Yes, the view is quite charming from here," said Wally—the dear! "Come and watch the winkles winking, Uncle Jeff!"

3. So down sat Ma and Unky. "How glorious is the sight of the sea, Clorinda!" says Jeff. "It recalls to my mind those lovely lines of Byron's, written on the occasion of a fancy dress ball in a cabman's shelter: 'Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean——'" "They're off!" said Willie.

4. For Willie had given the pig a hearty jab with his little stick, which caused it to do the hasty hop forwards. And while Willie and Wally, the darlings, did a little sand dance expressive of much joy, away went Ma and Jeff, and the pig and the trolley—Whoohoops!

5. "Owpch!" yelled Ma "Stop it, Jeff, can't you! We shall be over the rocks and into the sea in another minute!" "Fear not!" gasped Jeff. "I will yet save thee, fair one—O corks!" For here the pig took an awkward jump, and it looked as if the deep and dark blue ocean would be an easy winner.

6. Yes. They shot over the cliff into the vasty deep, where, luckily, some nautical joints happened to be handy, and hoiked them forth with shrimping nets. And Uncle Jeff made himself so nice and warm and dry again, chatting to Willie and Wally with a rattan cane. Ho! Some walloping that was!

1. "Don't you call this clever?" croaked Freddy Frog, doing his great balancing act on a big egg that he'd found on the beach. "Rather!" shouted all the others: "Fine!"

2. But all of a sudden that egg did a hatch, and out popped four hearty snakelets. "Oh, corks!" cried Freddy Frog, "I'm off!" And away went the crowd, sharpo!

HIDDEN MEANING.

Willie Pike: "Hang it all, every invitation to dinner I've had to-day has had a string tied to it!"

1. Said Mr. Monk, the kind schoolmaster: "Politeness, boys, is what we want. You should always bow low to your schoolmaster. See what I mean? Just show me!"

2. Then those long-necked scholars did show the good gentleman—so. And he was *some* sorry that he'd spoken. "We'll now take the history lesson, lads!" said he.

MORTAR-LY OFFENDED HIM.

1. "Here's something funny going to happen!" chortled Charlie, the owner of the tykelet. "When Spot charges into that chap with the mortar—oh, ho, ho!" Yes, the young fellow was decidedly diverted at the prospect.

2. Wallop! went the stick that the dog was carrying against the mortar merchant's legs, and over went the merchant. But as our nice young friend did the cheery chortle—

3. The mortar came over too; and there he was, well smothered—like so. And then it was the little dog, and the good policeman who laughed to see such fun. Dear, dear! What doings, to be sure!

QUITE COWED HIM!

1. "Dear me, what a remarkably lovely infant!" cried old McJorkins to the nurse. "May I," said he, "[illegible]?" "Certainly, go ahead, Whiskers!" (or words to that effect) replied nursie.

2. Pity that cow that was coming round the corner shoved its head through the pram at that moment, wasn't it? *Some* surprise for everybody!

Sergeant: "Let me hear all eyes turn in their sockets with a single click. Eyes r-right!"

NED THE NAVVY

1. Dear Mr. Editter,—I was a-goin' away to the seaside wiv my old dear larst Satterday, when my two young youngsters says they wants to come too. "No," I says. "You got to stop at 'ome till we come back! No argyments about it," I says. "That's enough! Buzz off!"

2. Well, next morning I takes the missis along to the station, me carrying the jolly old portymantoe, and gets the tickets, which I puts in the portywotsisname. But when our backs was turned, them kids come along, opens the bag (that's shorter), an' screws it dahn to the platform.

3. At last the jolly old train comes in. "Come on, Rosamund!" I says. "Here we are!" And I picks up the bag, and, o' course, pulls up part of the platform wot them kids had screwed it to.

4. So up rushes the station-master and a lot of other official joints, and there's no end of a argument, sir. And sudden-like, when the train starts out, I sees them kids, wiv their tickets wot they'd took, a-goin' orf to the seaside!

Yours the proud parent. NED THE NAVVY.

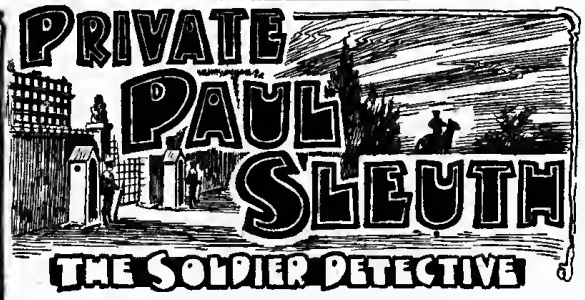
A PUTTY-CULAR PERSON!

Actor: "Ah! is that a dagger I see before me?"

Big Voice (from side wing): "No, sir; it's the putty-knife We can't find the dagger!"

7-8-15

OPENING CHAPTERS OF A POWERFUL AND DRAMATIC SERIAL STORY.



BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS FOR READERS COMMENCING TO-DAY.

Paul Sleuth, the world-renowned detective, has learned, through the medium of an agony-column cipher advertisement, of a plot against the life of Arthur Haydon, of the Belfort Fusiliers. Arthur is a gentleman ranker, having enlisted after being disappointed in his expectations of a large inheritance. His father was formerly an officer of the regiment, and for this reason Sergeant Kennedy befriends him. Arthur is instrumental in saving the life of Betty Hamilton, the colonel's daughter, and this officer allows Paul Sleuth to become a private in the regiment, the intent being that Paul Sleuth shall unearth the conspirators against Haydon's life.

The famous detective discovers that Sergeant Lightfoot, with "Darkie" and "Jumper," two of his comrades, receive instructions from one Duncan Drake, a retired and unscrupulous police-officer, who apparently wishes Arthur Haydon to be put out of the way. After several ineffectual attempts have been made on Haydon's life, Paul Sleuth, whilst with the regiment at Brampton, sees Duncan Drake enter the Royal Oak, at Brampton, which is situated a few miles from the camp.

Why had Drake come to Brampton, five miles from the camp where Arthur was stationed? Did his arrival portend fresh trouble for Arthur? Had Drake concocted some new and cunning scheme for Arthur's destruction? Had he come to lay his plans before his three confederates?

Paul Sleuth's thrilling adventure with Duncan Drake is now recorded below.)

The Mysterious Letter.

EXMOOR was reached about half-past six. When the tents had been pitched, and the day's work was over, the detective held a hurried council of war with Arthur and Dandy Dodwell.

Lightfoot was in the sergeants' mess-tent; Jumper and Darkie had gone to the canteen.

"Drake's here!" began Paul Sleuth.

The astonished looks which crossed the two men's faces showed that they had not seen him.

"Here? In camp?" gasped Arthur.

"No; at Brampton," said Paul Sleuth. "Didn't you see him as we marched past the Royal Oak?"

"No."

"Well, I did!" said Paul Sleuth. "He drove up in a fly, apparently from the station. And Sergeant Lightfoot saw him, too. And he wasn't surprised, either!"

"This means mischief," said the Dandy, with a glance at Arthur.

"Without a doubt," said Paul Sleuth. "Brampton isn't exactly the sort of place which a man would choose for a week-end holiday. Each time that Drake has turned up in the same neighbourhood as Arthur his arrival has been followed by an attempt on Arthur's life. That it will be so in this case, unless we can prevent it, I'm as sure as I am that I'm standing here."

"What do you think we ought to do?" asked Dandy Dodwell.

"Watch!" said the detective briefly.

"Whom? Drake?"

"That's impossible. He's at Brampton, and we're at Exmoor."

"He may come here to see his confederates."

"I don't think that's likely. It's much more probable that his confederates will go to see him."

"Ah! Now I understand," said the Dandy. "You mean that we must keep watch on Lightfoot, Jumper, and Darkie?"

"Exactly!" said Paul Sleuth. "We may be sure that Drake won't do anything off his own bat, so to speak; that is to say, he won't try to murder Arthur himself. Whatever plot he has concocted, he'll entrust it to his three confederates to carry out. To do that he'll have to interview them—or one of them, at any rate. He won't come here to interview them; they'll have to go to him. Therefore, our only chance of learning when the interview takes place is to shadow his three confederates. There are three of them and three of us," he continued. "Lightfoot is now in the sergeants' mess-tent; Jumper and Darkie are in the canteen. Drake won't want to stay down here any longer than he can help, and therefore, in all probability, he will have arranged to meet his confederates to-night—or to-morrow at the latest. Knowing the man as I do, I think the chances are ten to one that the meeting will take place to-night."

He turned to Dandy.

"Drake may have arranged to meet all three of his accomplices, or he may have arranged to meet only one of them," he said. "To be quite on the safe side we'd better divide our forces, and each keep watch on one of the men. Will you undertake to keep a strict watch on Jumper's movements for the present?"

"I will," said the Dandy, without a moment's hesitation.

The detective turned to Arthur.

"And you'll keep watch on Darkie Dawkin," he said.

"Right you are," said Arthur. "And you, I suppose, will devote your attention to Sergeant Lightfoot?"

Before the detective had time to reply Jumper and Darkie walked out of the canteen-tent. They stood for a moment chatting to each other in the evening sunshine, then Jumper walked briskly away in one direction, and Darkie in another.

The detective glanced at his two companions.

"Away you go!" he whispered.

The Dandy glided after Jumper, and Arthur after Darkie. A quarter of an hour passed. Then Sergeant Lightfoot emerged from the big marquee, which did duty for the sergeant's mess, and sauntered off in the direction of Brampton.

Midway between the camp and the town the road ran past a small wood, known as Fowler's Preserve. As Sergeant Lightfoot approached this wood—little dreaming that Paul Sleuth was following him—a man walked briskly down the road from the direction of the town.

One glance was enough for Paul Sleuth. It was Duncan Drake!

"So it's Lightfoot he's arranged to meet!" muttered the detective to himself, as he glanced at his watch. "At Fowler's Preserve at eight o'clock. I'm in luck!"

Keeping in the shadow of the hedge, on the left-hand side of the road, he saw the two men meet and shake hands; then he saw them climb over the low wooden fence which divided the wood from the road and disappear amongst the trees.

After hastily reconnoitring the position, the detective made a wide detour, and entered the little wood at the opposite end. Drake and the sergeant were standing under one of the trees, in the centre of the wood, and presently the detective saw Drake take a letter from his pocket, open it, and hand it to Lightfoot.

Dropping on his hands and knees, the detective crawled through the bracken and long grass till he came within ten or twelve yards of where the two men were standing. Nearer than that he dared not go, lest his khaki tunic should betray him.

"When did you receive it?" he heard the sergeant ask, as he handed the letter back to Drake.

"Yesterday morning," said Drake; "and I wrote off at once to tell you I was coming down to see you."

"Are you staying at the Royal Oak?" asked Lightfoot.

"Yes; but only for one night," said Drake. "I must return to London to-morrow. But about this letter. You see what my client says?"

"Yes," said Lightfoot, somewhat sullenly. "I'm sorry, but it isn't our fault. "I'm sure we have done our best."

"Then you'll have to do better than your best," retorted Drake. "As you see from that letter, my client is thoroughly disgusted at the delay, and threatens to cut off supplies. He's an enormously wealthy man, and, naturally, I don't want to lose his patronage; so you've got to buck up, you understand, or I'll have to employ somebody else."

"But what can we do more than we have done?" asked Lightfoot in an aggrieved voice.

"What can you do!" said Drake scornfully. "You're living in camp with him, with sham fights taking place nearly every day, and you ask me what you can do! Great Scott! If I were in the regiment I'd do the trick in twenty-four hours!"

"But how?" persisted Sergeant Lightfoot.

"Well, here's an idea for you," said Drake; but before he could say any more a crackling of the undergrowth warned him that somebody was approaching.

"Walk back with me part of the way to Brampton, and I'll tell you my plan on the way," said Drake.

The two men quitted the wood, and strolled on in the direction of the town. Needless to say, the detective followed them, but he heard no more of their conversation, and presently they parted, and Lightfoot returned to camp.

"Well, what luck?" asked Arthur and the Dandy, meeting Paul Sleuth on the outskirts of the camp.

"What luck have you had?" asked the detective. "None at all, I guess."

"And you guess correctly, oh, wisest of men!" said the Dandy with a laugh. "Jumper simply mooched about the camp for three-quarters of an hour, and then returned to the canteen. He's there now."

"And Darkie did ditto," said Arthur. "You've been shadowing Lightfoot, haven't you?"

"How did you know?"

"We saw him coming down the road from the direction of Brampton, and a few seconds later we saw you coming after him. Did he meet Drake?"

"Yes," said Paul Sleuth.

And he told them of the meeting in Fowler's Preserve, and what he had heard.

"So my unknown enemy is getting impatient, it appears," said Arthur with a nervous laugh. "He has written to Drake, complaining of the delay in polishing me off, and threatening to give him the sack. I wonder who the scoundrel is?"

"I'll tell you to-morrow—with luck," said Paul Sleuth.

Arthur stared at him in open-mouthed amazement.

"You'll tell me to-morrow!" he gasped. "What do you mean?"

"We know that Lightfoot and Jumper and Darkie have been bribed by Duncan Drake," said Paul Sleuth, "but we don't know who has bribed Duncan Drake. Drake is only the agent of the man he calls his client.

"This mysterious scoundrel has written a letter to Duncan Drake. That letter is now in Drake's possession. Doubtless it bears your unknown enemy's name and address. Possibly it explains why he desires your death. And that letter is now in the inside pocket of Drake's coat, and Drake is staying at the Royal Oak. Now do you understand?"

"I'm sure I do not," said Arthur. "What are you going to do?"

"First of all," said Paul Sleuth, "I'm going to apply to the colonel for leave of absence; then I'm going to spend the night at the Royal Oak. And in the middle of the night I'm going to break the law of the land by committing burglary. So long! See you to-morrow."

And before his astounded comrades could speak he turned on his heels and disappeared in quest of Colonel Hamilton.

The colonel listened to his story with rapt attention, and readily granted him the desired pass. He did more than that—he lent the detective a suit of civilian attire, and himself mounted guard whilst Paul Sleuth changed.

"Who goes there?" challenged the sentry as Paul Sleuth strove to leave the camp.

"A friend," said the detective.

"Stand, friend, and give the countersign."

"Boomerang!" whispered Paul Sleuth.

"Pass, friend; all's well!"

A moment later the detective had left the camp behind him, and was on his way to Brampton.

At the Royal Oak.

IT was half-past ten when Paul Sleuth reached the Royal Oak. Assuming the character of a visitor from London who had missed the last train home, and was consequently stranded in Brampton for the night, he interviewed the landlord, and asked if he could have a bed.

"Got any luggage?" asked the landlord, eyeing him suspiciously.

"Not even a handbag," said the detective with a laugh. "You're afraid of mo running away without paying my bill—eh?"

"Oh, no, sir!" said the landlord hastily.

"Oh, yes!" said Paul Sleuth good-humouredly. "What's your charge for bed and breakfast."

"Five shillings."

"Here's the money in advance, then," said Paul Sleuth, "and here's an extra shilling for the loan of a nightshirt, if you'll be good enough to lend mo one."

The landlord pushed the shilling back.

"I'll be very glad to lend you a nightshirt without any charge," he said. "Would you like to see your room now?"

"If you please."

The landlord lit a candle, led him upstairs, and ushered him into a small but neatly furnished bed-room.

"Would you like some supper, sir?" he asked when Paul Sleuth had expressed his approval of the room.

"No, thanks," said Paul Sleuth; "but I'll be very glad to crack a bottle of wine with you, if you've no objection."

The landlord had no objection, and five minutes later he and the detective were discussing wines in the smoke-room.

"Got many visitors staying here at present?" asked the detective carelessly.

"Not many," said the landlord; "but one of 'em is rather a famous character in his way. Perhaps you've heard of him—Mr. Duncan Drake, of London."

"I think I've heard the name," said Paul Sleuth. "He's a private detective, or something of that kind, isn't he?"

"Yes, sir. You'll often see his name in the papers."

"And he's staying here, is he?"

"Yes, sir. His bed-room is next to yours. He's out at present—went for a stroll after supper—but I expect he'll be back before long."

The detective hurriedly drained his glass and rose to his feet. Drake was out, and his room was next to Paul Sleuth's.

"Now's my chance to make a preliminary reconnaissance," muttered Paul Sleuth to himself.

"If you'll give me that nightshirt," he said to the landlord, "I think I'll turn in now. I've had a tiring day, and I've got to be up early in the morning."

The landlord having supplied him with a clean nightshirt, the detective bade his host good-night and went upstairs.

"Who is that gentleman?" asked the landlord's wife, when Paul Sleuth had taken his departure.

"I didn't think to ask his name," said the landlord, "but he's all right. He's paid in advance, and a nicer, pleasanter-spoken gentleman I never wish to meet."

If he could have seen what this "nice, pleasant-spoken gentleman" was doing at that moment it is highly probable that he would have changed his opinion.

For the first thing the detective did, after putting the nightshirt on the bed in his own room, was to open the door of Drake's bed-room and examine the fastening by the light of a small pocket electric lamp.

The Royal Oak, as previously mentioned, was an old-fashioned country inn, and all its appointments were of the simplest and most primitive description. For instance, there was a keyhole in the door of Drake's bed-room, but there was neither lock nor key, and the only method of securing the door on the inside was by means of a small brass lock and staple.

"There'll not be much difficulty about getting into this room in the middle of the night,"

(Continued on the next page.) 7-8-15

"Don't move!" said a quiet voice behind Paul Sleuth. "I've got you covered!"

PRIVATE PAUL SLEUTH.

(Continued from previous page.)

chuckled Paul Sleuth. "Perhaps, however, it may not be needful for me to come here in the middle of the night. Perhaps I can find the letter now."

He flashed his miniature searchlight round the room. An overcoat hung over the back of one of the chairs, and a gladstone-bag stood on the floor at the foot of the bed.

"He thrust the letter into the inside-pocket of his coat after he had shown it to Sergeant Lightfoot this evening," soliloquised Paul Sleuth. "Still, he may have locked it up in his bag when he returned to the inn. I've half a mind to have a look. It's a bit risky, but here goes!"

First of all, to make quite sure, he felt in the pockets of the overcoat. There was no letter there; nothing but a pair of gloves.

Taking a small bunch of skeleton-keys from his pocket, he picked the lock of the gladstone-bag and opened it. But there was no letter in the bag, either. Its only contents were a suit of pyjamas, a dressing-case, a change of linen, a box of revolver cartridges, and two or three papers, including a newspaper.

The sight of the paper reminded Paul Sleuth that he had not yet seen a newspaper for that day. Every day since he had enlisted he had borrowed Colonel Hamilton's daily paper, or had purchased a copy for himself, in order to see if any more of these mysterious cryptograms appeared. On this particular day, however, his time had been so fully occupied that the matter had slipped his memory.

"Better late than never," he mused, as he drew the paper out of the bag. "I forgot to buy the paper to-day, but now's my chance. By Jove, but there, though!"

Sure enough, the first advertisement in the "agony column" was couched in the form of a combination of letters which Paul Sleuth had learned to know so well.

"He told Sergeant Lightfoot that he had received a letter from his client yesterday!" muttered Paul Sleuth to himself. "This advertisement, no doubt, is Drake's answer to that letter. But why——"

His musing ended in a startled gasp, for at that moment he heard Drake's voice downstairs.

There was no time to decipher the advertisement then, for at any moment Drake might come up to his room. To take the paper away would have been to run the risk of arousing Drake's suspicions.

"I'll jot it down and decipher it in my own room!" muttered Paul Sleuth.

Suiting the action to the word, he copied the advertisement into his notebook, then, having hastily removed all traces of his visit, he locked the bag, shut the door, and stole into his own bed-room.

The door of his room was provided with a hook and staple similar to that in Drake's room. Having dropped the hook into the staple, he lit his candle and set to work to decipher the cryptogram. Being in possession of the key to the cypher, as the reader knows, this did not prove a very long or a very difficult task. And this is how the advertisement ran when Paul Sleuth had decoded it:

"North,—Your letter received to-day, August 2nd. Sorry for the delay. Not my fault. Will see agents to-morrow, and insist on immediate action. SOUTH."

"So far, all is plain sailing!" muttered Paul Sleuth. "But if North can write a letter to Drake, why can't Drake write a letter to North? Why does Drake reply to North through the medium of the 'agony column' of a daily newspaper? Why doesn't he write to North in the ordinary way?"

This, indeed, was one of the strangest features of the case. It was a mystery which even Paul Sleuth was compelled to confess he could not solve. It seemed such a roundabout way for Drake to communicate with North, such a needless waste of time and trouble. If one man could use the post, why not the other?

"There must be a reason for it," muttered Paul Sleuth; "but what the reason is—— Ah! Here's Drake coming up to bed! I wonder how long he takes to go to sleep as a rule?"

He glanced at his watch.

"Eleven o'clock," he continued. "I'll give him an hour. In the meantime, I'd better put out the light and pretend to go to bed."

He extinguished the candle, and threw himself on the bed. Needless to say, he did not undress. He had borrowed a nightshirt from the landlord, merely to give an air of plausibility to his story. He had no intention of using the garment. Neither did he intend to take off his boots, for he knew that he was engaged on a hazardous and illegal enterprise, and might have to take a flight at an instant's notice.

Lying on the bed, with every sense alert, he heard Drake enter his bed-room and fasten the door. He heard him open the gladstone-bag, and presently he heard him get into bed. A few minutes later he heard the landlord locking and bolting the doors downstairs. Then one by one the members of the household trooped to bed, and by half-past eleven the quaint old inn was wrapped in slumbrous silence.

Boom, boom, boom!

Midnight boomed from the tower of the parish church. With catlike stealth the detective slipped out of bed and drew over his boots a pair of rubber-soled goloshes. Then, without a sound, he crept to his door, unfastened it, and opened it.

Drake's room was still in total darkness. After listening at the keyhole for several seconds, and hearing only Drake's deep and peaceful breathing, the detective inserted the blade of his pocket-knife between the door and the jamb and noiselessly raised the hook. A moment later the door was open, and Paul Sleuth was inside the room.

Taking his electric bullseye from his pocket and holding it behind his back, he flicked the button with the end of his finger. The result of this manœuvre was that a flash of light illumined the room for the briefest fraction of a second—just long enough to enable Paul Sleuth to take stock of his surroundings.

Drake was evidently a man of untidy habits. He had dragged the gladstone-bag into the middle of the room before opening it, and after he had pulled out his sleeping-suit he had taken off his things and dropped them in a jumbled heap on the top of the open bag.

His under-clothing was on top of the heap, below them were his trousers and socks, then came his shirt and collar and tie, and at the bottom of all were his coat and waistcoat.

The bed stood in the corner of the room opposite the door. Drake was lying with his back to the wall and his face towards the middle of the room. One arm was under his head, the other—his right—was stretched out on the top of the counterpane.

All this was revealed to the lynx-eyed detective by that momentary flash of light. Scarcely daring to breathe, he stole into the middle of the room and fell gently on his knees by the side of the gladstone-bag. One by one, without a sound, he removed the various garments till he came to the coat. Then he slipped his hand into the inside pocket and drew out a letter.

Was this the letter from Drake's unknown client? Was this the letter which Drake had shown to Sergeant Lightfoot in Fowler's Preserve?

As the room was enshrouded in inky darkness the detective could not be sure of this, since the letter, of course, was invisible to him.

"I must make sure this is the letter I want," he mused. "It would be an awful sell if I took it away and discovered it was only a tailor's bill."

Still kneeling, he turned his back to the bed, so as to shade the light from Drake's face, and pressed the button of his electric lamp.

The envelope which he held in his hand was addressed in typewritten characters to "D. Drake, Esq., Private Inquiry Agent, Newton Street, W." The postmark was "London," and the date was "Aug. 3rd."

The detective experienced a distinct sense of disappointment as he glanced at this postmark. As the reader may remember, he had quite made up his mind that Arthur Haydon's unknown enemy—Duncan Drake's unknown client—was Douglas Elswick.

But Douglas Elswick was in Cape Town. If he wrote to Drake his letter would bear a Cape Colony stamp and the Cape Town postmark, and the date would be at least three weeks before the date of its arrival in England.

And this letter bore the London postmark, and the date was but two days ago! It was now the fourth of August. The letter had been posted in London on the second, and Drake had received it on the third.

"I'm sure this is the envelope which Drake took out of his pocket in Fowler's Preserve," muttered Paul Sleuth. "But if Drake's client lives in London—if he was in London two days ago—why does Drake communicate with him through the agony column of a daily paper?"

Inside the envelope was a second envelope, on which was written—not typed—"Duncan Drake, Esq.," and inside this second envelope was a sheet of thin foreign notepaper folded in four.

"This is the letter, without a doubt," soliloquised Paul Sleuth. "I begin to see daylight now. When Drake's client had written this letter he put it in an envelope, sealed it up, and wrote Drake's name on the outside. He then enclosed the letter in another letter to somebody in London, asking them to forward it to Drake. The person who received the letter put it unopened in an envelope, and addressed it in typewritten characters to Drake's office. That explains both the postmark and the date. Now to see what the letter says."

He drew the sheet of notepaper out of the second envelope, and was in the act of unfolding it, when a quiet voice behind him said:

"Don't move! I've got you covered! If you stir you're a dead man!"

(Another long instalment of this powerful story will appear in next week's FUNNY WONDER.)

Turn to page 2 and Commence Our Grand New Serial.

THE EDITOR'S CHAT.

My Dear Readers,—CHARLIE CHAPLIN, THE FAMOUS ESSANAY COMEDIAN, makes his first appearance on the front page this week. He is the pick of the fun market, and will keep you bright and jolly. Don't forget to look out for CHARLIE on the front page next week!

Our grand new serial story entitled, "All On His Own!" starts to-day on page 2. I hope you will enjoy the opening chapters, and will not fail to continue the story in next Tuesday's number.

I ask you most sincerely to read the chapters that follow on, and do assure you that you will be more interested in the story as it proceeds.

For many weeks I have worked with the author in preparing the new story, and now that our work is finished, I feel sure that THE FUNNY WONDER will score another success.

I would like to have a few words with new readers who have never seen THE FUNNY WONDER before, and also give them a hearty welcome.

At the same time, I would like to tell them that THE FUNNY WONDER is very popular all over the world. Not only does it circulate in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, but it is sold in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, and in all the British Colonies.

Think of that, and you will realise how widely THE FUNNY WONDER is circulated in all parts of the world.

Of course, all my old readers know that THE FUNNY WONDER is published every Tuesday at its usual price, one halfpenny. In each number I give you at least sixty new jokes and humorous pictures, and four good stories. Surely that is worth the modest halfpenny!

But there are hundreds of people in your own neighbourhood who have never seen THE FUNNY WONDER, and I want you to help me to make the journal more generally known.

I feel sure that if you handed your copy of THE FUNNY WONDER round to your friends they would be eager to become regular readers.

Thanking you in anticipation,

I remain,

Your sincere friend,

The Editor

"THE WONDER" SPECIAL SERVICE ORDER.

This Special Distinction of Honour has been founded in order to reward those readers who regularly read and help most to spread the fame of THE FUNNY WONDER, "Comic Cuts," and "Chips." THE FUNNY WONDER, "Comic Cuts," and "Chips" form the greatest trio of comics in the world.

On election to the WONDER Special Service Order the new member receives Five Shillings as a Honorarium (that is sufficient to buy THE FUNNY WONDER for two years), also a Handsome, Hand-painted Diploma containing her or his name, and the right to use the letters W.S.S.O. after her or his name.

Elected this week are:

Jack Horne, 12, Elm Park Avenue, Ranelagh, Dublin; A. Heany, 104, High Street, Wavertree, Liverpool; J. Spooner, 9, Albert Street, Windlestone College, near Ferry Hill, co. Durham; Annie C. Napier, c.o. Whitelaw, 9, Wilton Drive, North Kelvinside, Glasgow.

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SPESHUL KOLLUM BI ME!

HO, I SAY!

By HORATIO PIMPLE

(The Funny Wonderful Hoffice Boy.)

Deer wuns, A rewmer got erbout Fleet Street & the nayberhood wear i liv resently that i ad invested a hewge sum (runnin in2 5 figgers) in the Wore Lono.

The rewmer woz not awl-2-gevver in-korreckt, xcept that insted ov the sum runnin in2 5 figgers, it oanly run in2 the figger 5.

In uther wurds, it woz 5 bob wot i lent the Guvermunt, like a loyal Brittun, & i am kwite serting they wil lay out as menny Huns wiv it as possibul. Five bob ort 2 pollish orf at leest a duzzen, wich wurks out at 5d. each, & wich is a jolly site more than enny Germun is wurf, Kiser Bil inkloodid.

Ov korse, arter lendin the nashun this varst sum i adn't much munney left over 4 summer ollerdays. Neither ad Filpot Bottels, the "Chips" orfis boy, or Sebastian Ginger, the "Komic Kuts" ditto, or enny uther ov the lokal nuts.

"I dunno wot you fink," i sez 2 Ginger, the uther evenin, "but its mi opinyun moast ov us wil spend our Orgust ollerdays down bi the Tiddler Pond!"

"An very nise 2!" sez Ginger, "if yu arsk me, it wants a bit ov beetin in these days. The safest bathin in Ingland, sir! The cheepist ollerday resort in the world! Luvly views, elthy breezes—wot more do yu want?"

"Ginger," i sez, "yu r rite. I doant b-leeve the publick nose wot a magnifisent ollerday resort they ave got at their very dores, i mite say!"

"An wi?" arsked Ginger. "Simpli b-kause no-wun as got the sense 2 shout the odds erbout it, that's awl!"

I koodn't elp finkin that their woz a deel ov trewth in is wurds. Wot Tiddlerville wantid woz advertisin!

Wi do 1,000's ov peepul go 2 Margit, & uther

That saim nite i set 2 wurk & drew a poster ov a view ov Tiddlerville.

wel-noan see-side ollerday resorts? Simpli b-kause a bil en every ordin they kum erkrorse tels them they've got 2!

That saim nite i set 2 wurk & drew a poster ov a view ov Tiddlerville, over wich woz the wurds "Spend yore ollerdays at Tiddlerville!" The poster awlso kontained a portrate ov a yung feller in the prime ov yuth, intoxikated wiv the bracing breezes ov the plaice (wiv erpologies 2 the wel-noan raleway poster).

The next mornin i paisted it up on a wall in Biffens Kort, wear it woz eagerly staired at & admired bi awl the residunts. Sum ov them admired it so much that thay took bits ov it ome wiv them, wiv the result that their woz ardly enny ov the pickcher left bi the saim evenin.

Owever, they seam 2 ave taikn the good advise i gav them, 4 Tiddlerville as bean krowdid this ollerday & (4 its size) is every bit as populer as enny ov the Souf Koast Waterin Plaices.

Every day yu kan sea yung fellers & their gals paddlin erbout wiv their boots & stockins ung round their necks.

4 the benifit ov grown-up persuns like miself & a fu uthers, Ginger as kindly lent is burgerlo as a publick shelter & ban-stand, wear mouf-orgun konserts are given several times daily.

Several wel-noan performers ave given resitals & on Bank Ollerday, at kollossal xpense, we ave booked Signor Laurencio Saunders, the grate jew's-arpist! If o turns up (and e's not likely 2 refewse our offer ov 100 siggeret pickchers 4 wun performance), sum ov us r opin 2 ave a joy ride in is motor wile e is givin is turn!

4 uther amewsemunts we ave arranged 4 Jerry Jinks, the printers imp, 2 do the nigger minstrel stunt. It nevver okkured 2 im 2 do it til wun day i sez 2 im:

"Jerry, their's a 4-chune in that fase ov yore!"

"Ha?" e sez. "Wel, it must be buried sum-wear under the printers ink, 4 i karnt sea it!"

"That's just wear yu r rong, Jerry," i sez. "The 4-chune is on top ov it!" An sinse i xplaned ow a kuppel ov beef-bones woz awl that woz rekwired 2 go wiv is dirty fase, e as kollected duzzens ov siggeret pickchers at is performances.

Yes, there's no dowt erbout it, Tiddlerville is the plaice this yer 4 a plezzunt & enjoyebul olliday. Its a plaice wear yu soon git brown.

I'm enjoyin miself their & i ope, deer reeders, yu r aving a jolly good time wear-ever yu may b,

Yores til neckst week,

7-8-15 HORATIO PIMPLE.

THE DOINGS OF DENNY O'DOWD.

Whurroo! The times that they had on Bank Holiday! The fun and enjoyment! "It's the treat I'll be giving the family, this day!" says Denny. "Suro—I'll drive them all out to the fair, and it's the grand time we'll all have!" So he puts the pony in the cart—that is—in the shafts of the cart; and he says to Mrs. O'Dowd, he says: "Biddy; put on your best hat with the ostretched feathers!" And he says: "Here's two hoh, ye spalpeens—be off, and buy some mouth-organs, and whatever other diversions you can think of, and we'll be making a day of it!" And it was the grand day, too! How they punished the cocoanut shies! And there was lashings of gingerbeer, and everything that they wanted, whether they wanted it or not!

"There was nearly a bad fire at the theatre last night!"

"How was that?"

"The villain lit a cigarette and tossed the match in the snow!"

Fair Passenger: "How clear and bright it looks in the west, captain!"

Captain: "Well, it ought to! I've been sweeping the horizon with this glass for the last two hours!"

THUMBS UP!

Guest: "May I give you a tip?"

Waiter: "You may, sir!"

Guest: "Keep your thumb out of the soup when you hand it to customers in future, that's all!"

"What was on fire in town last night?"

"I think it must have been the library!"

"What makes you think that?"

"Well, I heard that the smoke was issuing in volumes!"

Mrs. Newlywed: "I wish we had something antique about the house!"

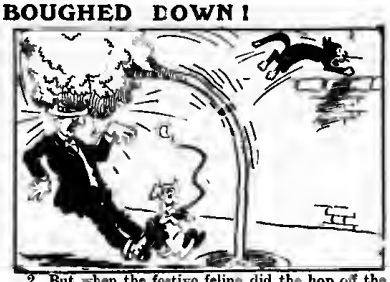
Mr. Newlywed: "Yes, so do I; a little old-fashioned cookery, for instance!"

Irate Householder: "The difference between a cow and a milkman is that a cow gives pure milk!"

Milkman: "Yes, guv'nor; but the cow don't give credit!"

HE FELT QUITE BOUGHED DOWN!

1. "Good dog! Seize her!" cried the sportive one to his pedigree pup, as the pussycat skipped it up the tree. And the pup, being out for a lark, did well and truly chase the said pussycat!



2. But when the festive feline did the hop off the tree, over the garden wall, the tree sort of rebounded; and copped our merry joker a large wallop on the apex! Whereupon he smiled no more for a space!

"What's your name, boy?"

"Tom Smith, sir; but they call me 'billiard-cue' for short!" "Billiard-cue! What ever for?" "Because I work better with a good tip, sir!"

NEITHER HAS THE OLD MAN!

"What, are you laughing at?"

"Dunno! The artist sketched the picture first, and hasn't found a joke for it yet!"

Farmer: "Why on earth have you made the furrow so crooked?" Jarge: "Yer told me ter steer for yonder cow, but she wud keep walking about!"

COULDN'T KEEP IN TIME!

Snail Flute-player: "What's the good of them composing such fast, jigglety music as this? It flusters me all to death trying to follow it!"

Have you seen CHARLIE on the Front Page?

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